Development & Marginalization: A Sociological Study of Maratha Cultivators in Nanded District

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Synopsis

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1. Introduction

Agriculture is the backbone of Indian economy, hence plays a pivotal role in terms of economic growth of the country. Agriculture provides employment to 56 percent of workforce in India. Agriculture not only contributes to overall growth of economy but also reduces the poverty by providing employment opportunities and food security to majority of the population in the country. The promotion of agro based products in international market provides the faster economic growth of the country.

There were 121 million agricultural holdings in India in 2000-01, out of them around 99 million were small and marginal farmers. In the latest Agriculture Census 2015-16 the average size of landholding in India was 1.08ha. This is a steep decline in average landholding after 2000-01 where average landholding was 1.37 ha.

The economic reform in 1991 made significant changes in terms of economic growth of the country. Many sectors blossom after the economic reform such as Information Technology (IT), stock market, improvements in telecommunications, exports, service sector growth etc. But the exclusion of agriculture sector from economic reform showed low growth. With the view to improve the condition of small and marginal farmer's government of India aligned many intervention programs to double the income of Indian farmers. The implementation of schemes such as Pradhan mantra Sinchai Yojana, Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana, Soil Health Card, Neem Coated Urea, Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, National Mission on Agriculture Extension and Technology etc.

The objective of this paper is to examine & understand the livelihood of small and marginal farmers belong to Maratha community in Nanded district. Since the Marathas does not fall under any reservation categories, the people in the same section of the society are marginalised in many aspects. Specially, the people who are totally dependent on agriculture with minimum amount of landholding were falling in such situation.

1.1. The Marathas

In the earlier time, it exists the community whose main occupation was cattle rearing, milk production, fruits and vegetable cultivation and farming. This section of population used to produce grains and cereals trough farming. It was the time when farming was not so commonly known for the people. As the demand for food was increasing people started to cut

down the trees for farming purpose. They had the power and strength to convert the forest land to an agriculture usable land. They started seeding and cultivating land hence they have acquired the name "Kunbi". With the power and strength they have the ability to protect themselves and altogether they could protect the village. The quality of protectiveness had made them the "Marhatte" which later became the "Marathe" over the period of time. The farming and cattle rearing was one of the favourite occupations of Marathas in the region. The Marathas then exchange the verbal conversation with people was called as "Marathi Language" (**मराठी भाषा**) which later been scripted and it was acknowledged as "Devnagari".

Maratha clan were emerged as the single most important power in the regions of Maharashtra and Karnataka. The Shahaji Maharaj Bhosale was the first prominent member of the clan who drew revenues from the Karnataka region. His son Shivaji Maharaj emerged as the most powerful figure in the clan to the west while Vyamkoji, the half brother of Shivaji Maharaj was able to gain control over the Kaveri river delta in 1670's. Shivaji Maharaj's early success were built on a complex relationship of mixed negotiation and conflict with the Adhil Shahis on the one hand and the Mughals on the other hand. Between 1670's and the end of his life (1680), Shivaji devoted his time to a wide ranging set of expeditions, extending from Thanjavur in the southeast to Khandesh and Berar in the north. The good fortune of Shivaji Maharaj did not fall to his son Sambhaji Maharaj who was captured and executed by the Mughals in the late 1680's.

Marathas had dominated the politics of Maharashtra after the independence of India. Maharashtra has witnessed more than 16 chief ministers who belonged to Maratha Community till now. Marathas were supposedly the dominant caste in the state as well as in India's politics. Such a dominant caste, mostly rich, landowning, politically influential community have fallen into poverty due to low economic growth in the last two decades and did not manage to uplift the large proportions of these communities upward enough. Despite the political dominance over the years, subsequent agrarian crisis has led to wide gap among them leading to a decline in financial stability among lower middle class and middle class. It led to the demand for reservation in jobs and education (A Deshpande, S Saigaon, 2021).

Traditionally, the Maratha-Kunbis are primarily dependent on agriculture. The Marathas are suggested as Warriors and agriculturists because of their landholder background. In the recent time, the distress in agriculture and low landholding due to increase in family size had made the Maratha community more vulnerable to low economic and educational development in

Maharashtra. The growth of agricultural sector has stagnated due to low remunerative pricing, indebtedness, inadequate irrigation, crop failures and lack of credit delivery. According to M. Kumar (2009)the decline in the plan outlay in agriculture allied sectors, which fell from 14.9% in the First Five Year Plan to 5.8% in the Sixth Plan and finally to 5.2% in the previous Tenth Plan, coupled with declining investment in agriculture from 1.6% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 1993-94 to 1.3% in 2000-01. Further to this the decline in agricultural output does not fulfil the needs of people who are primarily belonging to the same. A comparative study of A. Deshpande, & R Ramchandran (2021) states that Marathas are more likely to own or cultivate land than all other social groups like Brahmins, Non-Brahmin forward caste, Existing Other Backward Classes (OBSs) and Scheduled Caste and Tribes (SC-STs), in terms of years of completed education the Marathas lag behind other social groups in Maharashtra. Other social groups in Maharashtra prosper over the period of time but that was not the case of people belonging to Maratha caste. Though Marathas had maintained the hierarchy in societal behaviour, the lower income from agriculture, increase in family size and lower the land holding had reduced the social status in recent years.

Recently Maharashtra government had appointed MG Gaikwad, the retired justice of High Court and formed the Backward Class Commission to study the backwardness of Maratha community. According to the report over 98% Marathas are marginal farmers who own less than 2.5 acres of land and their family income is also less than Rs. 1 lakh. The report says the 37% Marathas are below poverty line against the state average of 24%. The report also focused that there were 2.5% of Maratha farmers who own more than 10 acres of land. Over 76% Maratha families were working in agriculture and its related sector. In the last 10 years the migration among rural Marathas had picked up more due to low agricultural output and consecutive droughts. Marathas are now moving from rural to urban sectors in search of livelihood. Marathas, mostly working in an unskilled labour intensive occupation like hamal, maidservant, port workers etc. The education level had also deepened among rural Marathas due to reservations for other social groups such as Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and Other Backward Classes (OBCs). Irrespective of getting a better education the Marathas lag behind due to high amount of reservations for other caste categories. As per the report a mere 6% of Marathas reach to the undergraduate and post-graduate level while 0.77% have reached to the professional and technical courses. The research on current issues that were being faced by Maratha community is mostly underrated by researchers and demographers. Thus we found very few demographic or social studies on Maratha

community and their problems persist in the society. This study examines the Maratha farmers from rural areas to find the current situation of people in the community.

1.2. Definition of Small & Marginal farmers

As per the annual report published by Department of Agriculture & Farmers welfare in 2020-21, the agriculture plays a vital role in India's economy. agriculture employs 50% of the Indian workforce and it contributed 17-18% to the country's GDP (Census 2011). The small and marginal holdings (<2.00 hectare) constituted 86.08% of the total land holding in 2015-16. In the same year the agriculture and allied sector witnessed growth of 0.6 percent.

As per the Census of India the Small & Marginal farmers are 'those farmers whose landholding in less than 2 hectares".

1.3. Marginalization

As per the definition in Oxford dictionary "The marginalization is the process of result of making somebody feel as if they are not important and cannot influence decisions or events; the fact of putting somebody in a position in which they have no power". According to the above definition marginalization occurs when someone feels not important/has less capacity in terms of getting things done. The capability and income are directly proportional to each other. When income increases the ability also increases. In terms of Maratha cultivators who has low land holding the income of such section of the community is also less hence the marginalization of Maratha cultivators is the matter of concern in today's era.

2. Research Methodology

The target group to study the objectives of this research are small and Marginal farmers belong to Maratha caste. The study area is based on representing small and marginal farmers in Nanded district. The administrative blocks in Nanded district are 16. One village from each block will be selected randomly to fulfil the objectives of the study. From each selected village there will be the sample of 20 Maratha cultivators who falls into small and marginal landholding will be selected using purposive sampling technique.

2.1. Data Collection

The primary data will be collected using the questionnaire. A separate data collection tool will be formed to collect data from the selected respondents. Data will be collected by visiting each selected household of the study. The proper consent will be taken from the respondent before starting with the questionnaire.

2.2. Sample Size

There are 16 villages from Nanded district selected for the study. From each of the village the sample of 20 Maratha cultivators belong to small and marginal landholding category be selected to meet the objectives of the study. From 16 villages the study will cover over 320 respondents from Nanded district.

3. Objectives of the Research

1. To assess the livelihood pattern of small and marginal Maratha cultivators from Nanded district.
2. To understand the dependency on agriculture and other sources of income of Maratha cultivators
3. To assess the level of education and current occupation other than farming of Maratha cultivators
4. To examine the access to basic household amenities by Maratha cultivators in the block

4. Problem Statement

The Maratha community is deprived in many aspects, the poorer section of Maratha community have not tried to create an independent identity for themselves and have always shown the pride to the 10% rich and influential members of their community. The stance made by the poorer sections of Maratha community had made significant change in their livelihood. It has led the exclusion of this community in various social development schemes by the government. Instead of much demand since last 10 years the government had failed to include the demands of Marathas in reservations as well as falling in the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS). The EWS also exclude those whose family has five acres and more of agricultural land and 8 lakh plus income of a family. It is an unjust to a large section of

Maratha community in the areas where landholding is more due to joint family system as compared to other parts of the state. Despite having more than five acres of agricultural land, the annual income of most of the farmers are less than Rs 8 lakh due to low level of agricultural output.

5. Research Hypothesis

Over the period of time the income from agriculture has lowered due to many environmental and institutional factors such as small land holding. Predominantly, the Maratha community is based on agriculture. In the earlier time period the Marathas constitute huge landholding but now due to increase in family size and nuclear pattern of family in the village the landholding has come down. In the recent time, large amount of Maratha community fall into small and marginal land. Due to this the income of the family has come down and so the living pattern of Marathas in the village.

1. The Maratha cultivators are marginalized in terms of income from agriculture
2. The access to basic amenities are low among small and marginal cultivators from Maratha caste
3. The income of Maratha cultivators is lower than average income of farmers in Maharashtra
4. The Maratha cultivators education level in low due to low income from agriculture

6. Limitations of the Study

The attempt of this research is to represent the whole of Maratha cultivators but there are limitations which are bound to it. The limitations for the study are as follows:

1. The study considers one village from each block of Nanded district. The technique was adopted to get the representation of Nanded district. There may be the situation different in other part of Maharashtra; the outcome of the research is limited to Nanded district only.
2. Only the Maratha cultivators from selected village are taken into consideration for the study. The communities other than small and marginal cultivators from Maratha caste does not represent in the research.

3. Purposive sampling technique has been applied to meet the objective of the study. The purposive sampling itself has many biasness issues, to get the study done this technique is most useful and reliable, hence some issues can be identified and removed.

7. Planning of the Research

A statistical software SPSS will be used to process the data. The interpretations of the study will be developed using graphs and tables.

Chapter Scheme

Chapter 1: Introduction, Review of Literature & Research Methodology

The introductory chapter will present the background of the study, rationale about the research problem. The available literature will be reviewed to argue that the problem of Maratha cultivators is exists in the community. It also includes how the research was conducted and what types of methods it has included while conducting the research.

Chapter 2: Landholding pattern & Income from Agriculture

It is an important aspect to understand the landholding pattern of target population. The landholding pattern will include the type of land, sources of irrigation, income from yield etc. It also segregates the results in terms of small farmers and marginal farmers.

Chapter 3: Educational & Occupational Pattern

The farmers will be analyzed in terms of their level of education. The level of education of such group of people where agriculture income is low and no social security scheme being applied to this section of population could be an important analysis. This chapter will present the results of Maratha cultivators and their educational and occupational pattern. The current status of occupation will also be focused in this research.

Chapter 4: Access to Basic Household Amenities

In this chapter the access to basic household amenities such as access to electricity, gas connection, drinking water facility, toilet facility etc will be evaluated. The analysis of basic household amenities will be presented in this chapter

Chapter 5: Conclusion, Findings & Recommendations

The detailed findings will be presented in this chapter. After the findings on which conclusion the paper arrives will be included. Apart from this, after the results being presented the recommendations will also be incorporated in this chapter.

8. Conclusion

The research is done for the purpose of understanding the issues of Maratha cultivators who has small & marginal land. The Maratha caste does not fall into any reservation category, therefore it mostly been excluded from many social security schemes by the government. This hampers the section of population whose income is primarily based on agriculture. The study findings bring forward the livelihood condition of Maratha cultivators in Nanded district. The area about Maratha cultivators is mostly been neglected by the researchers, therefore it is an attempt to make the research more useable for most of the section of population.

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